WHAT WOULD A PROFESSIONAL DO?

We polled KGI students on how they would respond in certain professional contexts. We then asked Professor of Bioscience Strategy, Professor Daniel T. Byrd, to share his inclinations if he were in our shoes.

By Professor Daniel T. Byrd and Megan Hill

Scenario 1

The company you want to work for is conducting two rounds of interviews with KGI students, one early and one late in the week. Your close friend participated in the first round, you are scheduled for the second, and you’re also very interested in what the interview questions are because this company relies heavily on correct answers when hiring. You know your friend will tell you if you ask. What do you do?

- a. Ask your friend, assuming everyone else will do the same with their friends in the first round.
- b. Ask your friend on the basis that exercising your competitive advantage only makes you more qualified.
- c. Say nothing and rely on your natural abilities.

A-12%
B-21%
C-67%

Professor Byrd Says:

First, when in doubt, try to understand the spirit of the rules, not just the letter!

My first reaction would be to try and understand the company’s intent. Based upon the scant information, my default assumption should be that the company is attempting to provide an equitable test of all candidates, regardless of whether they are interviewed early or late in the week. So it would not take me long to conclude that seeking some advantage that was unavailable to early round participants is in violation of the company’s implied rules of the game.

Second, when in doubt, be conservative!

When one is in doubt about the rules, it is imprudent to interpret the rules in a way that is blatantly self-serving. I believe that selfish inclinations can cloud our judgment. So short-term, self-serving choices can often lead to longer-term regrets. It may be counterintuitive, but a conservative interpretation of the rules that goes AGAINST your self-interests can have better long-term "payoffs." Such decisions are beyond reproach, enhancing one's reputation and trustworthiness. These intangible assets can be much more valuable than getting the job!

Third and last, when in doubt, just ask!

The first two arguments above should settle the issue regarding what one should do. But if doubt remains, then transparency is the key. As the saying goes, there's no better disinfectant than sunlight! One could call the recruiting company and ask for clarification about the rules. If you would feel uncomfortable making such a call, then this is your conscience signaling that the contemplated action is questionable and that you should err on the side of not seeking advantage.
**Scenario 2**

What would you do if you were the friend who interviewed first and your friend asked you for the questions? Would you:

- a. Tell your friend knowing they are great for the job and think they deserve the advantage.
- b. Withhold the information even if they ask. Everyone should have the same information going into the interview.

![Poll Results]

**Professor Byrd Says:**

The scenario describes the person that approaches me as a "friend." As a true friend, I would deal with this situation with a broader aim in mind. My aim would be to help my friend make wiser decisions in all future such cases. Consequently, I would take him or her through a thought process along the lines of what I have discussed above in order to challenge his / her thinking. The goal would be for my friend to come to the realization that his / her request was inappropriate, such that the request would be withdrawn. If necessary, I would ultimately refuse to grant my friend special advantage without some evidence that the company had approved such action. But I hope that outright refusal would be unnecessary. I would invite my friend to provide a similar service to me on those occasions when my own judgment became impaired. We all need such relationships to be our best. Yes, the wounds of a friend can be healing.

**Thanks to the KGI students who took the time to respond to our survey!**

Left to Right: (top row): Chandana Thorat (MBS '12), Marc Pollack (MBS '11), Prof. Steven Casper (Advisor), Joe Head (MBS'12), Susan Alfs (MBS ‘12), Adam Calvert (MBS ‘11)

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Not pictured: Wendy Milling (MBS ‘12), Vinoudini Boj (MBS ‘12)